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CIA visit sparks protest

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A visit to the campus of Western Michigan University by a recruiter from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency sparked a small protest today by members of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES).

About eight people carried signs and distributed fliers outside the Placement Services office in Ellsworth Hall on WMU's western campus to protest activities of the CIA in Central America, according to Donald Koelb, a WMU graduate student who is a CISPES member.

"We're against the visit by the CIA for the same reason we don't want the Ku Klux Klan to come here to recruit," said Gerald Thompson, another student. "They have blood on their hands."

"We're trying to counteract an information vacuum that exists — there is no reliable information about El Salvador or Nicaragua available in the U.S.," Koelb said.

Dr. Chester C. Arnold, director

of WMU placement services, said the CIA recruiter will interview 12 or 13 students at the school.

"The interviewing is a pretty regular process, actually," Arnold said, adding that while there were demonstrations against CIA visits in 1980, during the Iranian hostage crisis, there has been little protest activity since then.

"It's business as usual here," Arnold said.

Dale Peterson, a spokesman in the CIA's Washington office, said such protests are rare now.

"They've dropped off precipitously over the years," Peterson said. "We have people recruiting on hundreds of campuses, and we've had them there all along."

The protests do not interfere with recruiting activity, Peterson said.

"We get the best people," he said.

CISPES president Philip Schmitt said another protest is planned for Thursday, when the CIA recruiter visits Kalamazoo College.